

Dynamics with Many Faces: The Changing Ethnic Composition in the Suburbs of Bratislava

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Recent research highlights the suburban areas of Bratislava, like other cities in the region, as experiencing unprecedented dynamism across all measurable aspects. Beyond environmental and landscape changes, population and housing dynamics are particularly significant. Migration flows from across Slovakia are reshaping this region's social and cultural fabric. Among these changes, shifts in ethnic composition are especially notable. This is particularly true for the southeastern suburbs of Bratislava, which historically have been ethnically diverse. This paper focuses on changes in the ethnic structure of Bratislava's southeastern hinterland, with reflections on these changes from the mayors of two communities with the most dynamic ethnic change from 2001 – 2021. Migration processes are shown to be among the most crucial drivers of these changes, impacting communities and their cohesion and necessitating reflection by local authorities.

Keywords: ethnicity, migration, Hungarians, ethnic change, population change, suburbanization

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Introduction

Migration flows generally bring changes to demographic structures. In addition to the natural movement of the population (the difference between birth rate and death rate), they contribute to the transformation of entire regions, human resources and education, as well as changes in age distribution. A specific aspect of migration is its impact on ethnic composition. This historically complex region, located between the ethnic territories of Slovaks and Hungarians and in the hinterland of Bratislava, raises many questions about the future of the region and the further development of its cultural, and especially linguistic, landscape.

The potential for conflict is not fundamentally different from conflicts in other locations where large-scale residential suburbanization occurs with a sudden influx of population that differs from the local inhabitants in multiple ways. This potential is further increased by an atypically low level of social interaction in rural areas. Sociodemographic differences introduce an additional factor, which is not so much rooted in cultural distinctions but in language. Given the significant emancipation, the presence of a network of cultural, educational and religious institutions fostering the language, and the previous insularity of the ethnic community, the potential for linguistic interaction difficulties manifests on both sides.

Literature review

In the literature, especially in Central European studies, there are few examples of the impact of suburbanization processes on ethnic structures. More often, suburbanization research focuses on ethnic mobility and its consequences in different contexts, experiences and spatial settings (Tammaru, van Ham, Leetmaa, Kährik, Kamenik, 2013; Stillwell, Hussain, 2010; Ray, Halseth, Johnson, 1997; Finney, Simpson, 2008, etc.). Findings by Tammaru et al. (2013) in post-Soviet Estonia show similar trends as Slovakia – ethnic minorities are less likely to leave cities, so cities and urban areas in the suburban ring are more ethnically concentrated than rural areas in such rings. Ethnic minorities seem to be less mobile, just like in the Slovak-Hungarian suburban area of Bratislava (Majo, 2020). Migration flows in villages with a Hungarian majority in this area have shorter distances than in villages that are predominantly Slovak. Also, in the UK (Finney, Simpson, 2008) migrants belonging to ethnic groups moved less than majority-white groups even in comparison with similar socioeconomic characteristics. An example from Richmond, Canada (Ray et al., 1997), shows how historically white suburban areas are ethnically diversifying – in this case with the Chinese population, which is a relatively new ethnic group in Canada. Not just the inflow of new ethnic groups, but also the diversification of ethnicity and transformation of formerly relatively homogeneous suburban areas has certain similarities in many countries. Moreover, in Western

European countries with a longer history of suburbanization trends, we can even see the suburbanization of ethnic minority families of a second generation of immigrants also moving outside the city (Booi, Boterman, Musterd, 2021: 3).

In terms of functional urban regions and migration flows influencing ethnic breakdown, several studies from the hinterland of the Košice region reflect changes of ethnicity (Novotný, Pregi, 2015; Pregi, Novotný, 2022) in that area, which also lies near the Hungarian-Slovak ethnic borders. Another study (Pregi, 2023) attempted to perceive the changes of the whole Slovak-Hungarian ethnic area in southern Slovakia, where migration plays a crucial role alongside another demographic process. The pattern seems similar: migrants are mostly Slovaks and are younger in terms of age. In the Bratislava region, ethnic changes with a stress on the historical parallels of a “wounded region” have been described by Majo (2020).

Since Bratislava’s suburbanization region crosses the national border, several aspects of this suburbanization have been studied, and not just in Austria (Farkas, Klobučník, 2021), but in Hungary as well. The platform for interethnic interaction broadens over the boundaries – most of the migrants of mostly Slovak ethnicity settle down either in mostly Hungarian or Austrian areas. In the case of Rajka, which serves as a suburbanization destination of Bratislava in Hungary, several analytical studies examine the issues of Bratislavans relocating there and the creation of an ethnically heterogeneous village center alongside the homogeneous districts (Balizs, Bajmóczy, 2018, 2019), currently with the perception of such migration and the potential of conflict or cooperation (Balizs, 2023; Balizs, Somogyi, 2024). The suburbanization processes, regional identity and cultural events in the villages of the Žitný Ostrov area, as well as their connection to the locality, have been studied by the research project of L. Bott Domonkos (2019). These studies build on earlier questionnaire surveys conducted in selected villages of Žitný Ostrov (Mészárosová-Lamplová, 2010).

Methodological aspects of the study

One of the most crucial questions is delimitation of the researched region. The ethnic makeup of the southeastern hinterland has always been diverse, and the boundary between Slovak and Hungarian areas has shifted over time. One example can be seen on the analysis of Majo, Kusendová (2007), where in one of the districts in this region the ethnic boundary was unstable over the 20th century. We decided to outline the set of researched communities based on the fact that they are in the region of Žitný Ostrov (Csalóköz, Schüttinsel) and in the north, villages that in 1900 had a Hungarian majority (see Fig 1).

We also included communities that were not predominantly Hungarian but were adjacent to the current Bratislava city area. In the Functional Urban Region, these communities represent the historically continuous non-Slovak part, creating a special

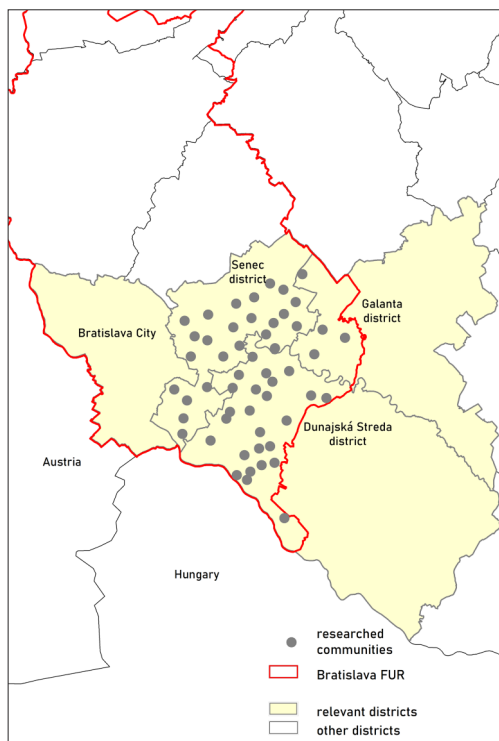


Figure 1: Map of the researched area and communities.

types of municipalities in the capital's hinterland – municipalities with a majority Hungarian population (where Hungarians make up 50% or more) and other non-Hungarian municipalities. According to the 2021 census (Štatistický úrad SR, 2021), 16 municipalities had a Hungarian population share of more than 50% (14 in Dunajská Streda, 1 in Senec, and 1 in Galanta districts). The remaining municipalities are considered non-Hungarian.

Spatial delimitation is based on a combination of statistical and functional criteria. On one hand, we use official administrative districts; on the other, we consider Functional Urban Regions (FURs) – spatially continuous areas that are relatively self-contained in terms of daily commuting between the urban core and its surrounding areas (Bezák, 1990).

As commuting patterns evolve, the boundaries of FURs may shift. Therefore, for consistency and accuracy, we adopt the delimitation proposed by Šveda and Šuška (2020). The evaluation methods were composed of two approaches: a) quantitative (migration and ethnic structure) and b) qualitative (interview). The combination of these approaches provides a comprehensive overview and understanding of the dynamics of changes in the ethnic structure in the defined suburban area of Bratislava.

In the case of migration, the data source was data on the annual movement of immigrants and emigrants in the municipality of the defined area in the years

region that is being strongly influenced by migration flows in the hinterland of Bratislava. From the perspective of Hungarian ethnography, Hungarians in this area inhabit two ethnographic areas. According to Liszka (2003: 170), one area covers the “Žitný ostrov” area (where the area near Bratislava is called “Upper Žitný ostrov” area), and the communities north of the Malý Dunaj River belong to the “Mátyusföld” region (Liszka, 2003: 208). Both regions had strong interactions, and due to the German minority in communities near Bratislava there were also contacts with Burgenland in today's Austria, while the Danube River represents to a certain extent a cultural boundary (Liszka, 2003: 172).

The spatially defined territory is shown in Fig 2. For our purposes, we focus on migration trends in two

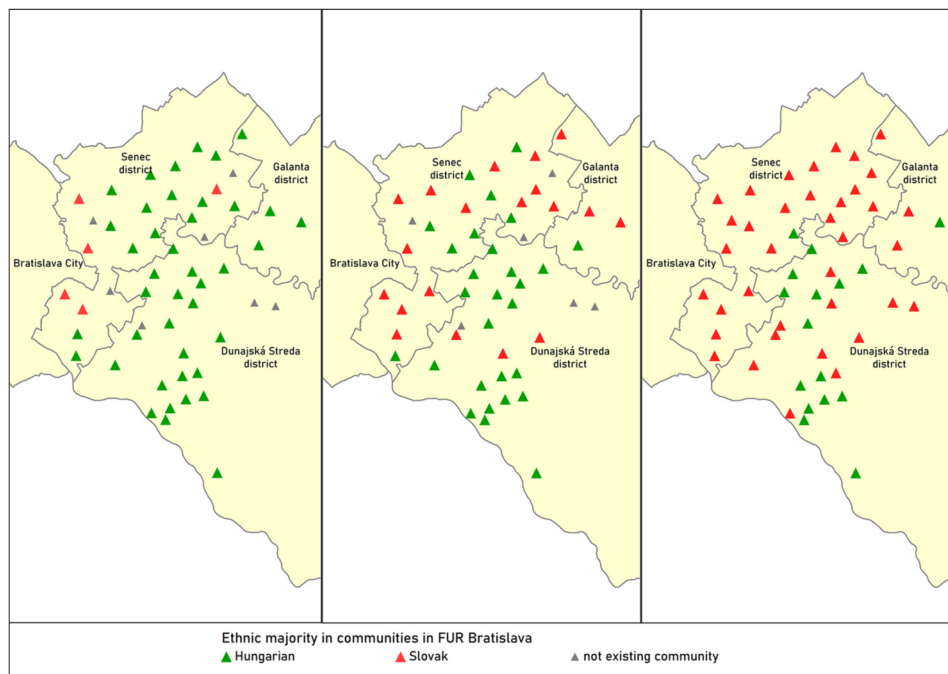


Figure 2: Map of the dominant ethnic group in communities in the functional urban region of Bratislava in 1900 – 1950 – 2021. Source: Majo, Tížik, Škápik, 2017; Štatistický úrad SR, 2021

2001–2023 (Štatistický úrad SR, 2024). These data are only for internal migration flows within Slovakia. The data were processed in three-year averages. The ethnic structure of the population was assessed based on data from the Population Census in 2001 and 2021 (Štatistický úrad SR, 2001, 2021). Twenty years is sufficient to capture the changes in ethnic structure involving the dynamics of the suburban region of Bratislava.

The qualitative aspect of this paper reflects changes in the suburban area through the perspectives of mayors from two communities currently experiencing the most significant ethnic transformation – a decline in the Hungarian population to below 50% between 2001 and 2021.

This approach offers immersion into villages undergoing ethnic shifts while also highlighting material changes, such as community growth, infrastructure challenges and interactions between autochthonous and allochthonous populations. For ethical reasons, the identities of the mayors and their communities are kept anonymous. Both mayors were asked the same set of questions, focusing not only on perceptions of ethnic change but also on broader issues of community development and growth.

The main purpose of this paper is to explore the dynamics of Bratislava's suburban area from a different perspective. While this perspective is rooted in the physical transformation of the region, its core is intangible, yet essential. The unprecedented growth of communities – driven by new immigrants from across Slovakia – has been

reshaping the cultural landscape. One such transformation involves ethnic change in areas historically inhabited predominantly by Hungarians.

The first part of the paper presents a brief statistical evaluation of the ethnic changes in the region. The second part captures the perceptions of mayors from two of the most dynamic communities. We hypothesize that ethnic change is evident in the increased use of the Slovak language, rising enrollment in Slovak schools and the emergence of potential tensions – not only between long-term and new residents, but also between Slovak and Hungarian populations.

However, no mayor reported any ethnic conflict, and it appears that such tensions do not pose significant challenges – even in Rajka, a village in Hungary that forms part of Bratislava's suburban area (Balizs, Bajmóczy, 2019).

Migration Trends in Slovakia

Internal migration in Slovakia has undergone significant changes throughout recent history, responding to various demographic, economic and social factors.¹ In the 1990s, an underdeveloped housing stock forced people to move to suburban areas within commuting distance of major cities, marking the beginning of suburbanization. As the influence of the previous regime weakened, state housing support diminished, and the housing market gradually liberalized. By the mid-1990s, the number of people migrating fell to approximately 80,000 per year and reached historically low levels at the turn of the millennium.

After 2000, migration numbers gradually increased, from 80,000 to over 100,000 (average per year) in 2022. At the same time, full-scale suburbanization of large cities began in Slovakia (Bezák, 2000, 2014; Matlovič, Sedláková, 2004). Suburbanization is the second chronological stage in local urban development. While this process is already a historical phase in the most urbanized regions of the world, it is currently dominant in Central and Eastern Europe. Suburban development brings not only physical transformation of the peri-urban landscape but also changes in local population characteristics (Šuška, Šveda, Výboštok, 2019). Between 2000 and 2019, nearly 110,000 people migrated to municipalities surrounding Bratislava (gross migration flows), with 44,000 coming from Bratislava itself (40%), 33,000 from other suburban municipalities (30%) and almost 30% from other regions of Slovakia (Podolák, Šveda, 2019).

¹ Migration during this period was mainly associated with post-war industrialization and movement to cities with housing opportunities.

Migration Balance in Municipalities in the Hinterland of the Capital City

Migration flows from across Slovakia are reshaping the social and cultural structure of the studied region. Among these changes, shifts in ethnic composition are particularly noteworthy, especially in the southeastern suburbs of Bratislava, which have historically been highly diverse. Based on nationwide statistics in the context of the district level, it can be stated that in the years 2001–2003, the districts of Senec (11.69‰), Malacky (6.04‰) and Pezinok (5.94‰) in the Bratislava FUR recorded the highest annual crude rate of net migration. The Dunajská Streda district also experienced migration gains (3.48‰). In contrast, the city of Bratislava had a negative net migration of – 1.46‰ in 2001–2003. By the end of the observed period (2021–2023), the average crude rate of net migration in the Senec district rose to 23‰, followed by Dunajská Streda with 8.78‰ and Malacky with 7.22‰. The capital city reached a positive balance of 1.9‰.

Our research area (52 municipalities in the districts of Dunajská Streda, Senec and Galanta) received almost 50,000 migrants (measured as net migration) between 2001 and 2023. The crude rate of net migration for the entire observed period suggests that Hungarian municipalities are significantly less attractive in terms of migration compared to other municipalities in the region (Table 1).

Tab. 1: Crude rate of net migration of municipalities in the area surrounding Bratislava (2001 – 2023)

	<i>The average state of the population</i>	<i>Net migration</i>	<i>CRNM (‰)</i>
<i>Hungarian municipalities</i>	383 087	3 501	9,14
<i>Non-Hungarian municipalities</i>	2 138 846	45 882	21,45
<i>All municipalities</i>	2 521 933	30 220	11,98

Source: ŠU SR

Note: net migration = the difference between immigrants and emigrants

CRNM – crude rate of net migration = the difference between immigrants and emigrants per 1000 inhabitants

The trend of the crude rate of net migration in both types of municipalities also confirms the region’s migration attractiveness (Figure 3). However, a differing trend can be identified based on the type of municipality. Until 2009, both Hungarian and non-Hungarian municipalities were equally attractive. From 2010 onward, however, non-Hungarian municipalities became significantly more attractive for migration.

Although Chart 1 indicates that Hungarian municipalities have shown increased migration attractiveness over the past two years, since 2016–2018, non-Hungarian municipalities have shown a declining migration gain.

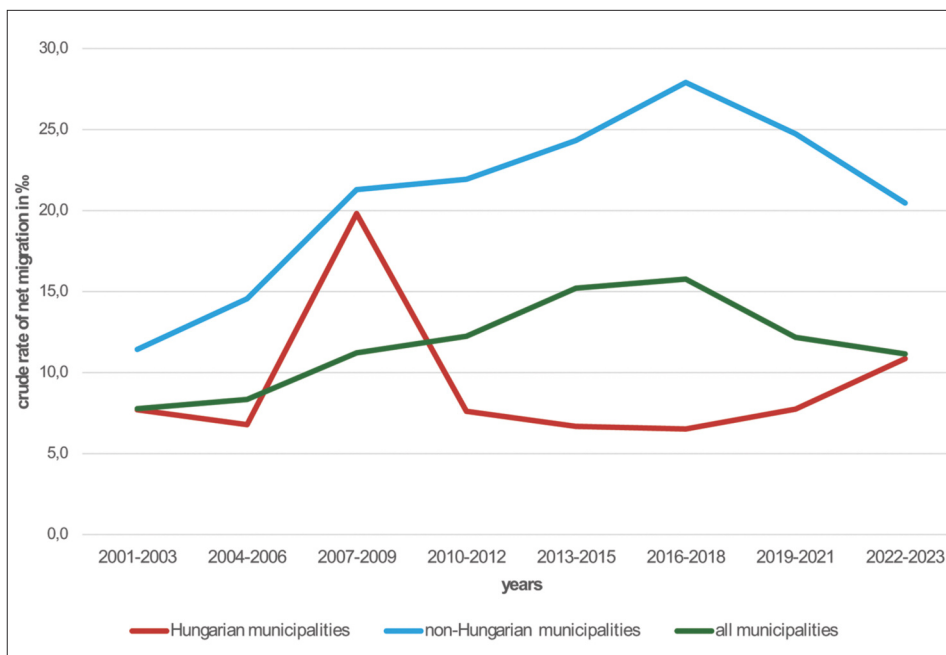


Figure 3: Crude rate of net migration in the defined municipalities in the area surrounding Bratislava (2001–2023). Source: ŠU SR, 2024

Hungarian Municipalities

In 2001, 29 municipalities in the region could be considered Hungarian-majority municipalities (where the Hungarian nationality exceeded 50%). By 2021, this number had declined to 16. The outlined migration trends, to some extent, reflect the declining growth index of the Hungarian population in the studied area. Overall, the group of Hungarian majority communities have significantly lower migration gains compared to non-Hungarian communities (see Figure 2).

On the other hand, nearly all Hungarian-majority municipalities have recorded a decline in their Hungarian population and an increase in their Slovak population. There is only one community in this area experiencing a decline in the Slovak population and an increase in the Hungarian population.

The studied area has seen a significant decline in the number of declared Hungarian residents. A total of 36 municipalities in the studied region recorded a decrease in the Hungarian population between the 2001 and 2021 censuses. However, this decline is part of a broader trend across Slovakia. According to census data, in 1991, residents identifying as Hungarian made up 10.7% of the population. By 2001, their share had decreased to approximately 9.7%, and by 2021, it had further fallen to less than 8.5% (Ivančíková et al., 2023).

Reflections on the Dynamics of Ethnic Changes by Local Authorities

On one hand we have migration statistics and trends that unveil the dynamics; on the other are perceptions of such dynamics by the representatives of specific communities. We aimed to explore the perception of such changes from the perspective of two villages that have undergone the most significant shifts in their ethnic composition.

In 2001, both communities had over 90% Hungarian residents, but within twenty years, this proportion dropped below 50%. Both communities have a similar number of inhabitants and have experienced significant population growth – one has doubled in population, while the other has seen an increase of 50%.

The ethnic composition of these new settlers is predominantly Slovak. While Hungarians (in terms of ethnicity, not nationality – they are all citizens of Slovakia) also participate in migratory processes, the net migration balance is positive for both ethnic groups. However, the proportion of Hungarians in this balance is less than 10%. Although Hungarian migration helps mitigate the overall decline (the absolute number of Hungarians has decreased but at a lower rate than the regional average), they are still outnumbered by Slovaks immigrating from various regions of Slovakia. Another factor contributing to population shifts is the increasing number of individuals with a university education (approximately 17% and 15% in the two communities, respectively) and a slight rejuvenation of the population, as indicated by the rising proportion of individuals aged 0 – 14. Alongside the “Slovakization” of these communities, there has been an increase in the proportion of educated and younger individuals. As a result, the ethnic identity of the villages is gradually being replaced by a new one, characterized by differences in ethnicity, education, age and lifestyle.

How do mayors, who represent both the indigenous population and newcomers, perceive and reflect these changes? We conducted interviews with the mayors of two communities (Mayor 1 and Mayor 2) in this area undergoing the most significant change in their ethnic structure. The interviews were semi-structured, with the opportunity to speak freely about their experience and visions in their community. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the mayors were notified that the interviews would serve a scientific purpose and that their names and communities would remain anonymous.

Population and Community Growth Perception

The mayors of these communities have served for different durations – one has been in office for twenty years (Mayor 2), while the other has held the position for only a few years (Mayor 1). The latter mayor is not originally from the village but moved there from even further south in Slovakia, making him an atypical newcomer

compared to others arriving from more distant Slovak regions. Their perception of community/village growth is influenced by the existence of a local development plan, which, though not mandatory for smaller communities, helps prevent uncontrolled development and unregulated community expansion. It also provides a framework for managing pressure from developers and companies interested in selling land parcels. One village (Mayor 1) already has such a plan, while the other (Mayor 2) is in the process of developing one.

We haven't finished the development plan yet. We will complete it by the end of the year. But I had to initiate it to prevent haphazard and reckless construction. (Mayor 1)
According to the zoning plan, our municipality is expected to quadruple in size. Over the past ten years, two major zoning decisions have been issued – one for 90 houses and another for 40. (Mayor 2)

However, the limitations of such planning arise from its reliance on standardized templates, which are often based on quantitative data but may overlook the qualitative aspects of community life.

The zoning plan was indeed developed, but very... at that time, I would say, in a rather template-like manner. Certain conditions were set, but no measures were taken for details and for the comfort of living. Conditions were established regarding which areas could be developed. Essentially, they used the zoning plan for its intended purpose – designating specific areas of the municipality for different uses – but they didn't think beyond that (...) For example, they didn't consider that if people were going to live in a particular area, what conditions would need to be in place. So, we faced issues such as not even having a place to put waste bins. (Mayor 1)

A challenge related to population growth in this area is that many individuals do not officially change their permanent residence, despite living in these new areas as temporary residents. This means they are not counted in the official population figures, which determine state funding for local services, yet they still benefit from community amenities and infrastructure. This issue goes beyond ethnic aspects of population in local communities and causes difficulties in the whole region. This is not an issue in the case of a regular population or for entrepreneurs who have their companies registered in Bratislava (Mészárosová-Lamplová, 2010: 103).

But making predictions – that's very difficult. We can't just add a new area to the zoning plan... (Mayor 1).
That woman told me that it didn't work out for them, that there were 55 plots. 55 plots. They thought it would increase the population of the municipality by 150 people, but in the end, only about... maybe 40 people have actually registered at most. (Mayor 2).

We have roughly half of our residents who aren't officially registered here. And it's precisely because of the lack of infrastructure that they don't register. Every young family needs a doctor, a kindergarten, a school, a post office – things that we simply don't have. And since we were such a small, forgotten village, even the transportation situation is pretty bad. (Mayor 1).

Development and the willingness to adapt communities rely not only on the mayors but also on local representatives elected in municipal elections. Candidates must have permanent residence in the community and be familiar to voters. Currently, neither of these two communities has an elected representative from the newcomer population, meaning all representatives are from among the original inhabitants:

They weren't interested... No, I'm thinking... there was just one, but that was in the previous term, and even then, he was only appointed as a substitute. So, he ran for office, but... he didn't get in. No, they didn't show any interest. (Mayor 1)
Once again, it proves that people don't want to work, but they do want to give orders (Mayor 1) ... The municipal council remains entirely the same as before. Some ran for office, but none of them got elected. (Mayor 2)

Language Use in Community Communication

When a community undergoes ethnic transformation, one of the most visible signs is the diversification of language use. If this change happens rapidly, the introduction of another language – typically Slovak in addition to Hungarian – becomes more frequent, though its adoption varies across different aspects of community life. Language as an identity marker is one of the important aspects that reflect the intensity of the assimilation process. Hungarians in Slovakia, according to Gyurgyik (2004: 192), are much more influenced by unfavorable assimilation processes rather than demographic trends.

The importance of language as a solid marker of Hungarian identity was shown by Macháček (2011: 202), where 72% of the respondents said that a true Hungarian is the one who speaks Hungarian fluently. This relationship was slightly stronger among older respondents than among younger ones.

At the official level, Slovak is not automatically incorporated into municipality (community) meetings, as long as all participants are Hungarian-speaking locals. Meetings are primarily conducted in Hungarian:

And they are all of Hungarian ethnicity. So, when we don't have the public involved, we make use of our rights. (Mayor 1)

However, when public members are present, Slovak is used in accordance with legal requirements.

And when the public is present, everything automatically proceeds as it should, according to the law. (Mayor 1)

They attend the meetings, and those who come... they are Slovaks, so I have to speak in Slovak. (Mayor 2).

Authorities strictly adhere to language equality rules in official documents and announcements. Community news is shared via notice boards, local radio or messenger apps, with options for both languages:

I have two groups created on Messenger – one exclusively Slovak and one Slovak-Hungarian. The app is also set up so that whatever language a person downloads it in on their phone, that's the language everything will be displayed in for them. (Mayor 1)

Education

One of the most significant ways to maintain a language is through education. Since these communities are small, the school network is limited. Historical experience in Slovakia also brought negative processes towards Hungarian ethnicity during Socialism. That regime encouraged minority assimilation through school closures in small villages and the unification of Slovak and Hungarian schools under one directorship, but this policy was abandoned after 1989 (Gyurcsik, Satterwhite, 1996: 514). With demographic processes in suburban areas, the possibility of new educational facilities is again emerging.

One community has a kindergarten that serves children from neighboring villages, while the other has plans to build one. Local authorities ensure that language policies are upheld.

You know, our kindergarten is Hungarian. But we've never had any issues with the Slovak language because I made it clear from the start that Slovak children would also attend. That way, we could have a full kindergarten and secure enough funding for your salaries – so that you would have the highest salaries in the district. At the recent farewell event, 14 children graduated, and half of them were of Hungarian nationality and the other half of Slovak nationality. (Mayor 2)

The other community plans a bilingual kindergarten:

And I immediately planned for two classes, with the idea that one would be Slovak and the other would be Hungarian. (Mayor 1)

Elementary schools are not available in either community, so students attend schools in larger nearby villages. Some Hungarian parents choose to enroll their children in Slovak schools to reduce their academic workload.

I personally know parents, both Hungarian, who automatically send their children to Slovak schools. Not so that they can learn Slovak; that's just an excuse. There are fewer subjects there. That way they can skip Hungarian literature, Hungarian grammar and Hungarian history. That's three subjects... And I also notice that they then speak Slovak at home. (Mayor 1)

Cultural activities

Official performances of a village as one community also include festivals and various cultural activities. Many communities, usually in summer, organize community days with a manifold program that also includes invited performances, usually music bands and singers. In communities with such transformation as a changing ethnic structure, the selection of bands and programs should be composed very sensitively, and this is not an easy task for organizers.

Well, when I came to live in this village, it was already bilingual. But it was still more, the Hungarian resonated. I had such a thing happen to me, I can tell you, on... about this... A lady came to me who had only recently moved here with us, of course, she is not registered in the village. And she told me that she does not go to these events, because we should realize that relationships and situations have changed here, and we should change these events as well. And I answered her, but you see, fifty-fifty, we always have one speaker in Hungarian, the other in Slovak, or rather we always give something without speaking, so that it is the same. But she tells me that we should adapt the whole thing to them. So, I told her, ... excuse me, when I come somewhere and expect them to adapt to me, that's called an invasion. She was taken aback, but she didn't say anything more. (Mayor 1)

In the case of religious activities, almost all the funerals are in the Hungarian language, and since no community has a church, the believers attend services in nearby communities either in Hungarian or Slovak language. Services in communities usually take place during festivals (such as Community Day) and are conducted in both languages.

Other cultural associations

Both communities sustain associations in their communities. One community has a Firemen Brigade (see the recruitment notice, Fig. 4) and a Pensioners' Club, and the mayor plans to organize a Red Cross Unit. In the other community there is an inactive Firemen's Brigade.

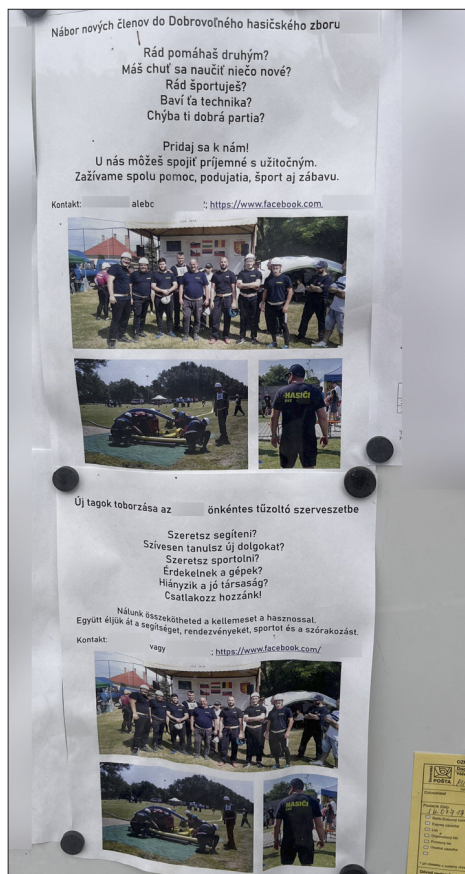


Figure 4.: Example of the proportional information in Slovak and Hungarian languages in one of the surveyed communes. Author: © Juraj Majo, 2023

they don't really want to put their hands to the work anymore. But I say, I think it is more of a generational problem and not a national one. (Mayor 1)

Conclusion

Migration processes shape the multifaceted landscape of both urban and rural areas. In particular, the migration flows between cities, and their hinterlands are notable for their speed and scale. In this context, Bratislava has growing and evolving communities that are closely connected to the city. The changes in this region are evident in many aspects – they can be measured, quantified and compared. Beyond quantitative aspects, qualitative factors must also be considered to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of transformation in this area.

We have firefighters, but they are not active, because the ones I had... we had them a long time ago and they also had a car. They went to competitions back then. When I joined, I already begged them to start the car at least once a year. They didn't even have time... because I don't have people, and I know that no one would go to the competition, no one. (Mayor 2)

And the community also had a Soccer Club that had a similar destiny:

It's been like this with soccer, too. (Mayor 2)

There is a general declining interest in involvement in such activities. One mayor perceives it as a generational issue, where younger citizens due to their work and family activities do not have much time or even an interest in participating in such activities.

They are very happy to come when you invite them, when you provide them with something, but there is already a problem for them to contribute to it. There is already a problem. So,

One example of such qualitative transformation, often not immediately visible, is the shift in the ethnic landscape. With newcomers arriving from various parts of Slovakia, historically Hungarian communities are undergoing changes not only in their material environment but also in their cultural landscape. These shifts manifest in various forms, such as evolving communication patterns and changing demands from residents and local representatives. This article aims to illustrate one of the most dynamic transformations in the region, where Slovak and Hungarian ethnic areas intersect, gradually leading to a growing Slovak presence. As a result, many communities must adapt to newcomers from different regions and linguistic backgrounds.

Interviews with two local mayors reveal common patterns in this transformation that transcend ethnic differences. These include challenges related to community growth, the need to find compromises in cultural events that cater to all generations and groups and increasing individualization, which has contributed to the decline of various associations and communal clubs that were once essential to community life.

Many of the processes outlined here are ongoing and show no signs of concluding in the near future. The continuous growth of communities and steady influx of newcomers will further reshape the cultural landscape and likely contribute to the ongoing decline of the Hungarian ethnic group in this region. As a result, this area remains one of the most dynamic sites of ethnic change in Slovakia.

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